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ABSTRACT

The gap between the number of minority teachers and the proportion of minority students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states continues to widen. This publication discusses the impact of historically black institutions on the supply of minority teachers and the actions taken by SREB states to increase the number of minority teachers. The problem is examined in the light of the following factors: (1) the overall minority undergraduate enrollment and degrees awarded; (2) opportunities for careers in other fields; and (3) the effects of standardized testing for teacher certification. Strategies to increase the number of minority teachers are suggested. (JD)

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REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

NEWS OF EDUCATION IN SREB STATES

Preparing More Minority Teachers

Why the Decline in Minority Teachers?

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- *Why has the number of minority teachers declined dramatically since 1975?*
- *What role have historically black colleges and universities played in meeting the need for minority teachers?*

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The gap between the number of minority teachers and the proportion of minority students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in the SREB states continues to widen. For example, minority enrollments have increased in Alabama and South Carolina, but the percentage of minorities in the teaching force has dropped in both states.

In the past two years nearly half of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states reported an increase in the percentage of minority students, *but not a single SREB state reported an increase in the percentage of minority teachers.* This situation is also true for many states across the nation. If the downward trend in the number of minority teachers continues, it may be common for children to complete kindergarten through 12th grade without being taught by even *one* minority teacher.

This SREB publication is the first in a series focusing on the supply of minority teachers. Reports to follow will discuss:

- Historically black institutions: What is their impact on the supply of minority teachers?
- Actions taken by SREB states to increase the number of minority teachers.

Minority students represent 30 percent of the students enrolled in the nation's public schools. Three-fourths of the SREB states have minority enrollments above 25 percent, ranging from 25 percent to 56 percent. According to the U. S. Department of Education, minority teachers represented only 13 percent of the nation's public school teachers in 1986. While this is a smaller percentage than in nearly all SREB states, among those SREB states that have information on minority teachers, the proportion has decreased or remained the same in recent years (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Minority Enrollment and Teachers, SREB States

	Minority Students as Percent of K-12 Enrollment*		Percent of Minority Teachers†	
	1985	1987	1986	1987
Alabama	36%	38%	26%	25%
Arkansas	26	25	14	NA
Florida	32	35	20	20
Georgia	37	39	NA	NA
Kentucky	11	11	NA	4
Louisiana	44	43	33	32
Maryland	42	40	23	23
Mississippi	51	56	NA	35
North Carolina	34	32	23	19
Oklahoma	24	21	7	7
South Carolina	41	45	23	22
Tennessee	22	23	NA	NA
Texas	43	49	23	NA
Virginia	28	27	19	19
West Virginia	5	4	NA	NA

SOURCES: * U.S. Department of Education, calendar years; † information from the State Departments of Education, school years.

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Among reporting SREB states, the proportion of minority teachers ranged from 4 percent to 35 percent in 1987. Only in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi did minorities comprise 25 percent or more of the teachers.

The percentage of new minority teachers being certified suggests that the decline may be greater in the years ahead. For example, Alabama reported recently that one-fourth of its teachers were minorities, but only about one of seven of the new teaching certificates were awarded to minorities in that year. The decline in numbers of minority teachers can be attributed to several factors including:

- Overall minority undergraduate enrollment and degrees awarded;
- Opportunities in other fields;
- Effects of standardized testing for teacher certification.

Minority Undergraduate Enrollment and Degrees Awarded

The number of high school graduates increased during the 1980s, but there will be fewer high school graduates by 1993 in the SREB states and nationally. It will be 1997 before the number of high school graduates reaches the current level, both nationally and in the SREB region. Unless the college-going rate for blacks can be increased, neither the number nor the proportion of blacks enrolled in college may change significantly by the year 2000.

To significantly increase the number of minority college graduates prepared to teach means:

- Increasing the number of minorities graduating from high school who are prepared to enter college;
- Increasing the number of minorities who enter programs to prepare for teaching; and
- Increasing the number of minorities who complete a degree and meet state certification requirements.

Over the last decade, high school graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics have been increasing, but are still below the rates for white students. Furthermore, proportionately fewer black and Hispanic high school graduates go to college. The U.S. Bureau of the Census has estimated that 76 percent of black 18- to 24-year-olds have graduated from high school. These rates are consistently lower than for whites, with 83 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds graduating. The rates for Hispanics are much lower; only 60 percent of the 18- to 24-year-olds graduate from high school.

Studies show similar college enrollment differences among whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Participation rates of 18- to 24-year-old blacks and Hispanics have worsened within the last 10 years (Table 2). The college participation rate for blacks peaked at 23 percent in 1976; it was down to 19 percent in 1980 and increased to 22 percent in 1986. Similar rates for Hispanics show a peak of 20 percent in 1976, a drop to 16 percent in 1980, and an increase to 18 percent in 1986. Whites continue to have the highest college participation rates.

There was an increase of nearly 11 percent in the number of black students enrolled in college in the SREB states between 1976 and 1986, compared to only 3 percent nationally. Although the total number of minorities enrolled has increased, the increase has been less than the overall gain in college enrollments. So, the proportion of minority students has decreased, both in the SREB states and nationally. In 1986, blacks represented 13 percent of the total college enrollment in SREB states compared to 8 percent nationally, down from nearly 15 percent and 9 percent, respectively, 10 years earlier.

In the SREB states, from the late Seventies to the mid-Eighties, the actual number of black students earning bachelor's degrees increased by 2 percent, compared to a national *decline* of 2 percent. Still, as a percent of total bachelor's degrees awarded in the SREB states, only 10 percent were awarded to black students in 1985—down from 11 percent in 1977.

TABLE 2
College Enrollment Rates
United States

	Percent of 18- to 24-year-olds		
	White	Black	Hispanic[1]
1972	26	18	13
1976	27	23	20
1980	26	19	16
1986	28	22	18

1. Depending on the country of origin and individual identification in response to U.S. Department of Education surveys, Hispanics may be included among the black and white college enrollment figures.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education: Postsecondary Education, 1988* (Volume 2), p.54.

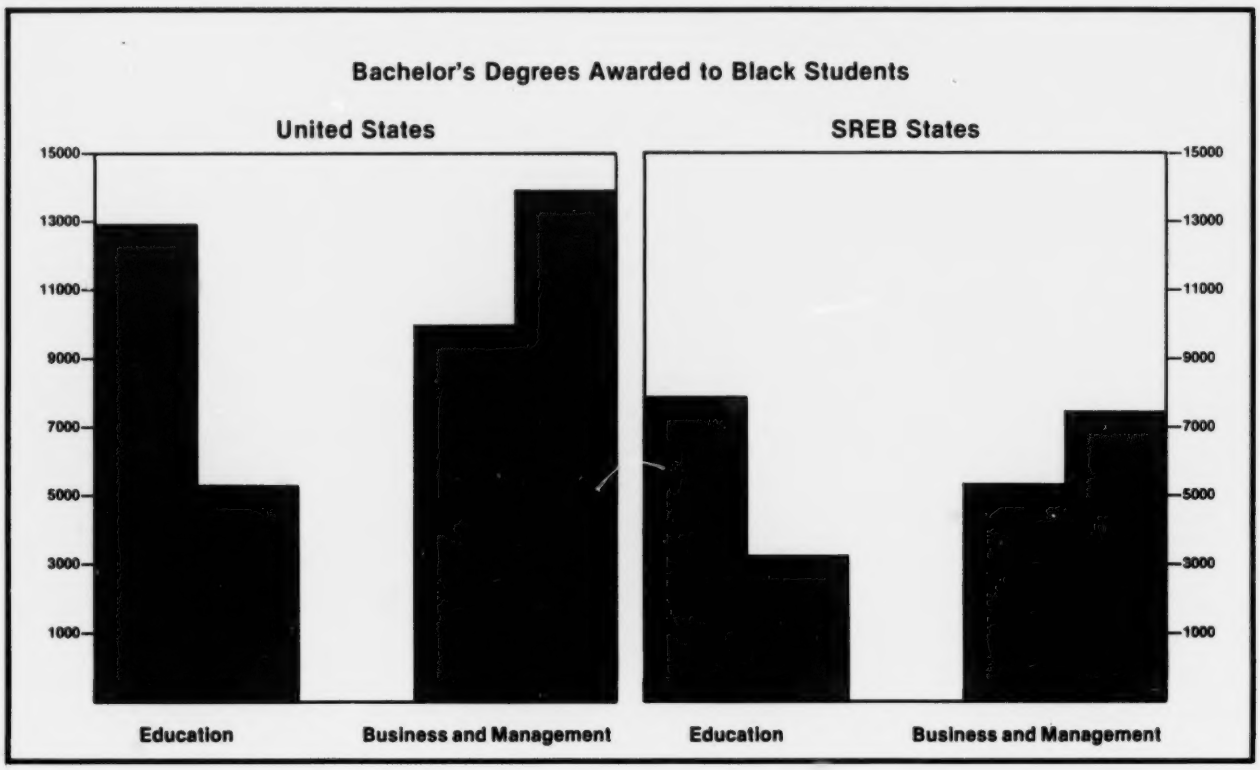
Note: Participation rates represent the proportion of a given group enrolled in an institution of higher education. For example, the college participation rate for 18- to 24-year-old blacks is calculated as a percentage of the total black 18- to 24-year-old population.

Opportunities in Other Fields

Today's black undergraduate college students are no longer majoring primarily in education. In 1977, education was by far the most frequently chosen field for blacks. That year, in the SREB region, some 30 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded to black students were in education (22 percent nationally). Comparatively, 20 percent were in business and management (17 percent nationally). By the mid-Eighties, the most popular degree field for blacks had shifted to business and management and the number of bachelor's degrees in education awarded to blacks had decreased 45 percent— representing almost 4,500 fewer education degrees. In 1985, for example, 3,614 bachelor's degrees in education were awarded to blacks, over twice that many (7,597) were awarded in business and management. This represents a dramatic shift with national implications, since approximately two-thirds of all prospective black teachers in the United States graduate from colleges and universities in SREB states.

Historically black institutions have been the largest producers of black teachers. In 1976, these institutions awarded nearly three of every four bachelor's degrees in education received by black students in the SREB states and 54 percent nationally. By 1985, historically black institutions awarded only 58 percent of the bachelor's degrees in education earned by blacks in the SREB region and 46 percent nationally. Of the region's approximately 3,600 black teacher education graduates, 2,100 were from historically black institutions. Even with the declines of the last decade, historically black institutions continue to be the largest suppliers of black teachers.

Statistics show clearly that substantially fewer minority students are now choosing to teach. More competitive salaries, better working conditions, and occupational prestige in other fields are luring many minorities to other careers. However, standardized testing also has had an impact on the number of minorities certified to teach.



Effects of Standardized Testing

All SREB states (46 states nationwide) require testing as a part of certification for teachers. Testing has been controversial— particularly in view of the fact that blacks and other minorities have had failure rates higher than those for whites. In Florida, for instance, between 1980 and 1988, 88 percent of the white candidates taking the state teacher certification test for the first time passed it, compared to 38 percent of the black candidates and 51 percent of the Hispanics. The Georgia Department of Education reported similar passing rates for first-time candidates taking the Georgia Teacher Certification Test. Between 1978 and 1986 in Georgia, only 40 percent of black candidates received passing scores on their first attempt, compared to 87 percent of the white candidates. Of those who took the Georgia test a second time, 83 percent of the black candidates passed it, as did 98 percent of the white candidates. These "passing rates" have led colleges and universities in the SREB states, particularly some historically black institutions, to revise their education programs.

Strategies to Increase the Number of Minority Teachers

If the decline in the proportion and number of minority teachers is to be reversed, efforts must be made to increase the number of minority students who prepare themselves in collegiate programs—programs that have higher standards than in the past. Simply denouncing standardized testing will not have an effect on the disparity in scores between minority and white candidates. Norman Francis, President of Xavier University, New Orleans, in addressing the Southern Regional Education Board stated, "We know it can be done. We are going to produce high quality minority candidates for our schools . . . The National Teachers Examination nor any other examination is going to stop us . . . All you have to do is invest in human capital."

To increase the number of minority teachers, improvements are needed in several areas:

- High school graduation rates must increase.
- More minorities should be encouraged to take college preparatory courses in high school.
- College-going rates and college retention rates of minorities must improve.
- Effectiveness of financial aid programs must be examined.
- Colleges and universities must revise curricula and provide a broad education to enable graduates to meet and exceed the minimum standards for certification.
- Influence of salaries and career ladder programs on recruiting and retaining more students, particularly minority students, in teaching must be evaluated.

Improvements will require specific actions by schools, colleges, and states. SREB will spotlight actions by historically black institutions and SREB states in this special series on minorities in the teaching force.

This edition of *Regional Spotlight* was prepared by L. Jill Rambert, SREB research associate.

April, 1989

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REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

NEWS OF EDUCATION IN SREB STATES

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